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AUTHOR Hendrix, Katherine Grace
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ABSTRACT

A qualitative case study examined professor perceptions of the influence of race on the establishment of credibility in the classroom. Non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews elicited participant-generated conceptualizations of credibility of three Black and three White professors in the Northwest. Results indicated that teaching at a predominantly white institution presented particular challenges for the Black professors. The three professors were cognizant of their "minority" status and believed that white students applied a different set of criteria for judging their classroom credibility and/or a more stringent set of standards than their Black students. However, they also acknowledged the need to earn credibility in the eyes of Black students. These professors believed that emphasizing their academic and field qualifications at the onset of the academic term was crucial to establishing their credibility as well as commanding the respect of the students enrolled in their courses. The three white professors were accustomed to classrooms where the majority of their students were of the same race as the professor. As a result, they worried less about their race influencing student perceptions. However, when presented with a scenario of teaching at a predominantly Black university, all three indicated they would take less for granted about their campus and classroom environment, and all indicated they would seek counsel from Black friends and colleagues regarding what to do, what to say, and how to say it. (Contains 34 references. The survey instrument is attached.) (Author/RS)

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Professor Perceptions of the Influence of Race on Classroom Dynamics and Credibility

ED 381 827

Katherine Grace Hendrix, Ph.D.
University of Memphis
Dept. of Communication Arts
Memphis, Tennessee 38152

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western States Communication Association in Portland, OR in February 1995.

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Abstract

Qualitative case study was used to examine professor perceptions of the influence of race on the establishment of credibility in the classroom. Non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews were used as data collection methods to elicit participant-generated conceptualizations of credibility and the corresponding communication cues of six male professors (three Black, three white).

Teaching at a predominantly white institution presented particular challenges for the Black professors. The three professors were cognizant of their "minority" status and believed that white students applied: 1) a different set of criteria for judging their classroom credibility, and/or 2) a more stringent set of standards than their Black students. However, they also acknowledged the need to earn credibility in the eyes of Black students as well. These professors believed that emphasizing their academic and field qualifications at the onset of the academic term was crucial to establishing their credibility as well as commanding the respect of the students enrolled in their courses.

The three white professors were accustomed to classrooms where the majority of their students were of the same race as the professor. As a result, although interested in establishing their classroom credibility, they worried less about their race influencing student perceptions. However, when presented with a scenario of teaching at a predominantly Black university, all three of these professors indicated they would take less for granted about their campus and classroom environment. In addition, all indicated they would seek counsel from Black friends and colleagues regarding what to do, what to say, and how to say it.

Introduction

In general, a plethora of research exists (within the speech communication and education disciplines) regarding the classroom experiences of teachers and professors. For example, teacher effectiveness has been the focus of much research during the last 30 years (Shulman, 1986). Within the speech communication discipline much attention has been devoted to identifying speaker characteristics associated with credibility. These studies, however, typically focused on public speaking or public figures with whom the audience possessed limited, if any, direct contact.

Of 95 studies with the term "credibility" in the title, only five examined the ways in which teachers established, maintained, and lost credibility, or the effect of teacher credibility upon learning (Beatty & Behnke, 1980; Beatty & Zahn, 1990; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; McCroskey, Holdridge, & Toomb, 1974; McGlone & Anderson, 1973). In the area of teacher credibility, none of the five studies employed a qualitative method despite the complexity of the classroom (as evidenced by education research within the classroom ecology paradigm) nor did they address the issues of student and professor race (see Endnote 1).

Black teachers have contributed to the education of children and adolescents in the United States for two

centuries. In addition, prior to voting rights legislation and the corresponding opportunities to run for political office, Black teachers were among the group of Black professionals (18th century through the 1950s) who served as leading spokespersons for the social, political, and economic interests of Blacks in the United States.

Speech communication and education researchers have overlooked the classroom experiences of teachers and professors of color. In particular, the experience of being a member of a subordinate minority group (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) functioning as a professional within a predominantly white educational environment has escaped the interest of social scientists (Foster, 1990; Weinberg, 1977). Yet Black teachers and professors do exist (see Endnote 2). The absence of the Black teacher's and professor's classroom perspectives and pedagogical knowledge in instructional communication and education literature renders the current description and analysis of United States education incomplete (Foster, 1990; Shulman, 1987; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

In view of the gaps in the extant literature regarding: 1) the way teachers establish, maintain, and lose credibility in classrooms, 2) the classroom experience of Black teachers and professors, and 3) the extensive reliance on quantitative research methods to identify and assess the impact of credibility, the researcher investigated the

credibility (i.e., verbal cues, nonverbal cues, and perspectives) of Black and white professors teaching at a predominantly white post-secondary institution. The investigation (including a pilot study) addressed four research questions (Hendrix, 1994) relative to student and professor perceptions regarding how: 1) credibility was communicated in the classroom, and 2) race influenced perceptions of professor credibility (see Endnote 3). This paper specifically addresses the third research question:

> RQ: When the professor's race is not the same as the majority of the students' in the class, what verbal and nonverbal communication cues do the professor view as leading to student perceptions of credibility?

This paper provides a: 1) historical overview of Black teachers and professors in the United States, 2) summary of five teacher credibility studies, 3) review of the methodology used to investigate the aforenoted research question, 4) research results, 5) discussion, and 6) conclusion.

Historical Overview

> African-American teachers who have been transferred to desegregated schools have experienced conflicts with colleagues, administrators, and white parents, the latter often challenging their competence as teachers solely on the basis of race... (Foster, 1990, p. 128)

Black Teachers and Professors in the United States

As stated earlier, Black teachers have contributed to the education of children and adolescents in the United

States for two centuries. Prior to the United States Supreme Court decision in the school segregation cases, Black teachers were instrumental in the learning process primarily of Black students. With the onset of desegregation, most Black teachers and principals were dismissed or demoted at the same time Black students were being enrolled in previously all-white schools (Coffin, 1980; Smith & Smith, 1973). If principals were transferred to "white" schools, they were typically demoted from administrative positions or retained in powerless roles. With reduced ability to hire and supervise, the number of Black teachers in the United States markedly diminished as white educators became the primary educators of all children in the United States.

An additional dimension of desegregation occurred in the 1970s in the northern and western areas of the United States and continues today. According to Banks (1986),

> resistance to school desegregation in Northern cities was often as tenacious and violent as it had been in the South...White parents in the North argued that they opposed school desegregation not because they disliked blacks but because they wanted neighborhood schools...The flights to the suburbs became known as 'white flight' (p. 44).

Banks also noted public schools in the United States are 1) becoming increasingly non-white and poor, and are 2) segregating a disproportionate number of white students from the rest of the student body by assigning them to academically gifted courses.

At the collegiate level, prior to 1900, teaching positions for Blacks were confined to land-grant colleges rather than privately supported institutions. According to Moss (1958)..."only two Negroes other than Dr. Du Bois held teaching assignments in predominantly white colleges prior to 1900" (p. 453). Thus, Black teachers and professors were restricted in interactions with white students.

The number of Black professors has not increased over the past two decades. In 1966, Rose indicated the

> nation's colleges and universities are a product of the social order in which they have evolved...they have reflected the ills of society rather than assumed a leadership role in attempting to alter the social order" (p. 26).

According to the 1985 United States Equal Opportunity Commission Report (Guess, 1989), 90% of the full-time faculty are white, whereas only 4.1% are Black. Similar figures are reported by the Equal Opportunity Commission Report in 1993. Specifically, Black and white faculty percentages are reported during 1975-76 as 4.4% and 91.7%; during 1989-90 as 4.5% and 88.5%; and, during 1991-92 as 4.7% and 87.7%. Many of the same concerns expressed 25 years ago (such as displacement of Black teachers and racist behavior towards them by their white peers, parents, and students) are still expressed today.

Teacher Credibility Research

According to Kennedy's translation of Aristotle (1991),

ethos (character - especially moral character) was conceptualized in two ways. First, rhetorical ethos referred to "the technique or effect of the presentation of character in a discourse" (p. 37). Second, ethos was drawn from practical wisdom and virtue as evidenced by previous actions, reputation, societal status, government position, and any other facets of the speaker which reveal her/his character but were not directly contained within her/his speech.

The "teacher credibility" research, which is most salient to this research, included only five studies. Communication researchers investigating teacher credibility recognized the special characteristics of the classroom setting, such as the extended contact period, which make classroom communication distinct from public speaking forums (McCroskey, Holdridge, and Toomb, 1974; McGlone and Anderson, 1973). Measurement scales were developed specifically for assessing teacher credibility identify character, sociability, composure, extroversion, and competence as major dimensions of credibility across mass lectures, laboratory settings, and independent classrooms (McCroskey, et al., 1974).

Consistent positive verbal and nonverbal cues were shown to maximize perceived sociability and competence (Beatty and Behnke, 1980). Greater perceived teacher sociability was found to assist in producing greater student-generated expectations of the need to perform well,

yet students were also able to distinguish between sociability and teacher qualification (Beatty and Zahn, 1990). Finally, teachers who used student-oriented affinity-seeking strategies were more likely to be perceived as credible (character dimension) and motivated their students to desire to learn (Frymier and Thompson, 1992).

Research Methods

A pilot study was conducted in order to test the efficacy of using case study as the qualitative method for data collection in a study of credibility (Hendrix, 1993). The following year, during the fall term, additional participants were studied in the second phase of the study. The methodology and results from both phases of the study are reported within this paper.

Research Site

Non-participant observation occurred in six undergraduate courses at a large four year research institution in the Northwest reflecting a predominantly white student enrollment. The same university was selected to conduct both phases of the investigation because the percentage of Black faculty and Black student enrollment was consistently small - certainly, less than the percentage found in the general metropolitan population. The Fall 1993 student enrollment at this research institution was as follows: Native American Indian 1.1%, Black 3.2%, Hispanic 3.3%, Asian 16.1%, and White 76.3%. Thus, out of a student body

of 34,000, only 3.2% (1,088) of the students were Black. Yet, according to the 1990 federal census records, 10.1% of the metropolitan area's residents were Black. Black faculty represented 1.5% (60) of the 3,986 faculty whereas white faculty represented 89.6% (3573).

Professor Participants

The participants in this study represented a "purposeful rather than random" sample (Miles & Huberman, p. 36). A specific set of predetermined criteria influenced who was solicited to serve as participant. Six professors (two in the pilot phase, four in phase two of the study) were identified by reviewing faculty data kept on file in the institution's Equal Employment and Affirmative Action Office. Only Black male faculty in regular, tenure-track teaching positions (rather than research positions) were selected from the institutional records and identified by department. Each prospective Black professor participant was then visited by the researcher in person. The research project ("professor communication styles") was explained; participation requested; and queries made regarding white counterparts who might be willing to participate in the research project. A form was left with each professor requesting additional information in a written format. Based on the names provided, white professors were then contacted.

Six professors were selected using the following criteria: 1) race, 2) gender, 3) age, 4) teaching

experience, and 5) departmental affiliation. The goal was to obtain the participation of male dyads reflecting professors who worked in the same division and possessed comparable years of teaching experience at the collegiate level. However, three of the professors would be Black and three, white. The criteria were developed to keep constant those variables which might otherwise account for differences in perceived credibility (e.g., a male versus a female professor). Keeping the participants similar reduced the likelihood of a vividness variable (Nisbett & Ross, 1980) operating for one of the participants, and not the other, in all areas with the exception of race.

In the pilot study, both Professors B(lack) and W(hite) were faculty in the same social science department on campus. Each professor had teaching experience which exceeds 10 years in the university classroom. In addition, they had both taught the 200 and 300 level courses under observation for this study as well as other undergraduate and graduate level courses. The student enrollment in Professor B's observed course was approximately 100 while the enrollment in Professor W's course was approximately 400.

In the second phase of the study, two of the professors - Professors Mearns and Kindred - were faculty within the performing arts in the College of Arts and Sciences who both taught 300 level courses which met the graduation general

education requirements. Both taught large group instruction courses with an enrollment ceiling of 228 (based on room size). Both courses were introductory in nature without prerequisites. The actual Fall enrollment for Professor Mearns was approximately 200 and for Professor Kindred was approximately 133.

The other professor dyad - Professors Samuel and Stone - taught within a structured undergraduate professional program. The program admitted approximately 50 competitively selected undergraduate students each year into a structured series of courses taught over a two year period. The professional program prepared students for immediate entrance into the job market and students moved through the curriculum sequence as a "class."

Data Collection Procedures

Non-participant observation schedule In the pilot study, non-participant classroom observations occurred on a daily basis during the first week of the quarter. Observations of one class period were also made during the second, third, fifth, seventh, and tenth weeks of the quarter. In the second phase of the study, the communicative behavior of the four professors and their interaction with students were noted during seven weeks in a ten week quarter. Two of the four professors taught at exactly the same time; therefore, a daily observation schedule was not feasible.

Weeks 1, 2, and 3	Daily observations every other class period
Weeks 4 or 5	Observation of two consecutive class periods
Weeks 6, 8, 10	One observation

The observations served as one means of validating data obtained during semi-structured interviews while simultaneously creating questions for the semi-structured interviews. Thus, the in-class observations: 1) generated interview questions, 2) examined the match between what professors said they did in class versus what the researcher observed, and 3) provided the researcher with firsthand knowledge of the professor's communicative behavior. Data collection occurred at several different points during the 10 week quarter and, as a result, was designed to track changes in perceptions which could have occurred over time.

Interviews

Semi-structured professor interviews (Ginsburg, Jacobs, & Lopez, in press) occurred prior to the onset of the quarter and several times during the quarter (see Endnote 4). Each interview was guided by a set of specific questions yet the interview format was left open to probing as well as to the exploration of unexpected topics which emerged.

Self, task, and impact concerns associated with the varying stages of teaching (Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1987) were used to provide a foundation for the professor interview questions as well as for guiding the researcher's

analysis of the interviewees' responses. By using the teacher concerns construct and the phrase "communication style," the researcher was able to introduce issues associated with credibility indirectly without mentioning the actual term "credibility." The term "credibility" was first used during Week 3 when the researcher provided each professor with a copy of the Professor Credibility Survey (see Form 1) and addressed each professor's class in order to explain the research project, distribute the survey document, and to invite students to provide identifying information which would allow for follow-up appointments and interviews.

Data Analysis

In-class observations Handwritten field notes were taken during each observation and the class session was also audio-recorded using a microcassette recorder. Over the duration of the quarter, the researcher observed each professor's nonverbal communicative strategies including proximity, eye-contact, facial expression, clothing, and voice tone. Verbal strategies such as sharing personal stories, asking questions, use of humor, statements regarding classroom philosophy, etc. were also noted as well as the structure of the class period from beginning to end - including the day's lesson. Field notes were reviewed using an open coding system (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which allowed the emergence of classification categories. The professors'

communicative strategies for each observed class period were summarized along with the researcher's general impression of the classroom dynamics.

The set of individual contact summary sheets (Miles & Huberman, 1984), based upon the marginal and reflective notations and the resultant coding from each class period were then reduced to one summary sheet which listed consistently, occasionally, and rarely exhibited communication cues. After constructing a summary sheet for a dyadic pair of professors (e.g., - Professors Mearns and Kindred), a second summary sheet was prepared listing similarities and differences in the classroom communicative behavior of the two professors teaching within the same discipline.

Professor interviews. Most of the interviews conducted with the professor participants took place in their office or a department conference room. The researcher listened to the participant responses and took handwritten notes while also audio-recording the interview. The researcher then played the audio-recording while handwriting the professors' comments verbatim. Marginal and reflective researcher comments were jotted in the left margin along with location of the comment on the audiotape. Marginal comments included noted areas of similarity with other professors. The interviews were transcribed from audiotapes with the characteris-

tics associated with credibility and the influence of race given particular attention.

Matrices were constructed to display visually the professors' responses to a particular set of key questions and the researcher's general impression of each interview. During the process of gridding participant responses visually, interviews were re-read or listened to in order to ensure that keypoints and depth were not lost during the process of reducing the data to fit with the matrix.

Results
Race and Credibility

Black Professor Perceptions

RQ: When the professor's race is not the same as the majority of the students' in the class, what verbal and nonverbal communication cues do the professor view as leading to student perceptions of credibility?

The Black professors believed it was important to establish a classroom atmosphere on the first day of class. They recognized their white students would not likely perceive them as being qualified. They believed their white students were not likely to use the same criteria for judging them as credible or would likely apply more stringent standards. They also recognized their Black students might either: 1) succumb to societal stereotypes about the academic ineptness of Blacks, or 2) fall prey to pressure from their white peers (trying to fit in and be accepted) and also question their capabilities.

Professor B. Instead of entering from a side door at the front of the classroom, Professor B purposely entered his large classroom from the back of the room and strode confidently down the stairs of one aisle to the front of the room as students watched him each class period. Professor B communicated in class and during his office hours that each student, regardless of race, must earn her/his grade. He noted his credentials, work experience, and research during class. He encouraged students to challenge the information he presented as long as they were willing to do so based on evidence rather than opinion. He was casual and relaxed yet left no doubt that he was the expert and the authority figure in the class as he directly gazed at students and scanned the room.

Professor B indicated he was always concerned about what his students think of him, however, his concerns differ depending upon whether the students are Black or white. Professor B worked to creat a comfortable environment for Black students, as he recognized, in many of their classes, no one was concerned about their comfort level. He mentioned that his lectures contained linguistic markers ("bruthas") to send metamessages of shared identity to minority students in the class.

In addition, he was concerned with how Black students viewed him as a person. Professor B worried less about what white students thought of him as a person but, rather, was

concerned about gaining the respect of the white students. He noted that respect was necessary for the class "to work [succeed]." Professor B expected and encouraged his positions to be challenged by students; however, the challenge had to be based on knowledge rather than opinion.

Professor Mearns. This professor described the classroom as being a different place for him than for his white counterparts. He noted it was different for women as well. And he went further to say that those few Blacks and women who were present within predominantly white institutions were typically of a "certain ilk." The Black professors have learned that to be successful they must: 1) learn the institutional "protocol," and then 2) continuously fight the perception that teaching was not something which Blacks do well. Professor Mearns indicated "even though very few Blacks are very good at basketball...[whites have an image] that's what 'they' do."

Professor Mearns believed he must establish the proper decorum on the first day of class. He reviewed the syllabus with his students and stated his expectation that students listen during class or not interrupt the listening of others. He also indicated he expected the homework assignments to be completed and the requisite effort made to perform well in the course. Throughout the quarter, he set an example by listening carefully to his students and to excerpts which were presented during the class period. In

addition, Professor Mearns performed demonstrations which were so powerful and breathtaking that the class sat in silence for a few moments afterwards.

Professor Samuel. This professor indicated his primary concern at this point in his teaching career was on providing students with the information which they needed rather than being concerned about his image. However, when he first began teaching expressed doubt about "whether they'd concentrate on the person more than what was brought across...over the years, I learned to ignore those personalities and to deal with the main mission - to educate." Yet even with his ascension into an administrative position as department chair, Professor Samuel fully recognized that his position as "chair" did not shield him from "personalities" who would not perceive him as credible for either of his roles - professor or chair.

Professor Samuel flashed his quiet, confident smile while clothed in his grey dress slacks, white dress shirt, striped tie, and double-breasted navy jacket as he entered the room and then immediately got down to business. He purposely stated his credentials and work experience because he knew "they're not sure if you're qualified" and the information served to put the students at ease if they knew he is equally or better qualified than his counterparts. He acknowleged that the average Black professor without

outstanding credentials would have "a tough, uphill battle" while attempting to establish his credibility.

White Professor Perceptions

These professors generally entered classrooms and taught courses where most of the students enrolled were white like themselves. The scenario presented to Professors W, Kindred, and Stone, which would place them in a teaching position at a predominately Black institution - e.g., Morehouse or Spelman - allowed them to draw a parallel between what they would experience and what their Black counterparts currently experience (or, in the case of Professor Samuel, experienced primarily during the first two years of his teaching career.)

Professor W. In the pilot study (Hendrix, 1993), it was difficult for the researcher to motivate responses from Professor W to questions related to race. Professor W described himself as being "racially sophisticated." He perceived his himself and his Black counterpart, Professor B, as both being capable of acknowledging the existence of racial prejudice while not being immobilized by it. In response to questions regarding his image in the eyes of minority students, Professor W said he hoped that what mattered was what he said and did in class rather than how he looked. Professor W stated that he tried not conceptualize his students in terms of race anymore than he would gender or age.

Professor W responded to the Black college scenario by saying, "I don't know what (pause) what would I do? What would I think? I don't know...(long pause)...I'd probably ask some of my colleagues there. And probably somebody like [Professor] B." Professor W indicated the content of his lectures would not likely change although they would be influenced by the campus "culture."

Professors Kindred. Professor Kindred indicated it was typical for his class to be approximately 30% Asian, 5-10% African- American, and 55% Caucasian. Thus, his course was typically mainly Caucasian with a "heavy Asian influence." Professor Kindred said the diversity was welcomed and they he tried to incorporate information from different cultures in his class. Teaching his course with an international perspective was not viewed as "pandering." He said his course had always been taught by incorporating information from other cultures - with great pride he stated "the world is catching up" as he noted efforts advocating multi-cultural approaches to teaching subject matter.

Professor Kindred indicated he tried not to conceptualize his students in terms of the racial makeup of the class. He, like Professor W, indicated he had lived long enough to mistrust stereotypes. For instance, he recognized that all Asian students were not extra hard-working. His approach to his classes was to assume only the following: 1) students were intelligent, and 2) eager to

learn. Professor Kindred was fully cognizant that the classroom experience for his counterpart, Professor Mearns, was not the same as for himself because prejudice had not been erased and the students "haven't learned yet."

When asked if he would have concerns if he were teaching at a predominantly Black institution like Morehouse College or Spelman, Professor Kindred indicated he would. He said he would remain himself ("warm," "gregarious") but would be quieter and would listen more. He would have to listen to get a feel for how other people saw him. He would contrast the theoretical views of how he fit in with the actual - in other words, what were the prevailing attitudes of "the aggregate will of the people."

Professor Stone. Given the historic nature of industry, Professor Stone rarely taught courses with women and students of color. And the students of color who were accepted into his department's professional program were typically Asian. Professor Stone's courses were usually filled with "nothing but a sea of Caucasian males." He described his students as "clueless" regarding race relations and appropriate and inappropriate behavior/comments. He recognized the challenges his counterpart, Professor Samuel, faced in the classroom as he interacted with and taught the students in this professional program. He believed Professor Samuel had "a lot of extra selling to do" in the classroom and off-campus in his related profession.

Professor Stone said, Professor Samuel and women "must perform maybe just that much better in order to stay even with somebody who's just part of the majority." When noting similarities between himself and his counterpart, Professor Stone further noted

> They wanna know where I've worked. They wanna know where [Professor Samuel] has worked. They wanna know that we've been around the block. And that's (pause) I can't see as that's any different (pause) Other than they might just quiz him a little harder about which block he's been around!
> (Personal Communication, December 6, 1993)

Professor Stone indicated if he took a teaching position at Morehouse College where he was one of only a few white professors, he would confront "a very mixed credibility job." He would have to address overarching questions about why he was at the institution which wouldn't be easy to separate from him approaching the classroom and doing his normal teachig and naturally establishing his credibility. During the interview he wrestled with whether he would be seen as bringing some extraordinary skills which merit his presence at the institution or whether his presence would be continuously challenged - forcing him to "reach deep down" establish himself as "the best teacher he could be."

Summary of Black and White Professor Perceptions.

Professors B, Mearns, and Samuel were cognizant of their presence at a predominantly white institution and they acknowledged that their white students were not likely

to use the same criteria for judging their credibility or would likely apply more stringent standards than Black students. Establishing that they had the requisite (perhaps outstanding) academic and field qualifications became critical to their credibility. The ability to command respect in the class was also essential - to interact positively with students yet remove any doubt about who had control of the class and the information.

Both Professors Mearns and Samuel recognized there were disciplinary areas in which the presence of Black professors was more accepted than others, for example, Blacks teaching African-American history rather than electrical engineering, dentistry, or medicine. Therefore, Black professors teaching in areas which were not ethnically linked to them experienced a more difficult time establishing their credibility. This was just as true in the pilot study when Professor B recognized there were certain content units within his course where he, as a Black, was expected to hold a particularly biased position.

This researcher observed the use of clothing and demeanor to reflect a particular attitude - one of confidence and control. These professors also stated their credentials, performed demonstrations, and presented an image of 'getting down to business.' And Professor B used linguistic markers as metamessages to: 1) signal his aware-

ness of his identity as a person of color, and 2) increase the comfort level of the students of color in his course.

Like their white counterparts, they were concerned about conveying their knowledge effectively to students. Yet they also recognized it would be more difficult for them to establish themselves as credible and confident in their knowledge and teaching skills.

Professors W, Kindred, and Stone were presented with the scenario of teaching at a predominantly Black institution - e.g., Morehouse or Spelman - which partly allowed them to draw a parallel between what they would experience and what their Black counterparts currently experience.

In contrast to other discussion topics, this interview question did not received immediate responses. Each of the three white professors paused, frowned, shifted body position, and pondered before answering. Typical immediate responses were, "I don't know," "I never thought about it," and "Good question. I don't know what I'd do..." Ultimately these white professors provided responses which indicated less would be taken for granted about their campus and classroom environment. They would monitor their behavior and responses to them carefully in order to learn the appropriate norms. And, in all three cases, advice would be sought from Black friends and counterparts regarding what to do, what to say, and how to say it.

Discussion

In conjunction with the research findings, it is also important to note: 1) recurring patterns of phenomena, 2) study limitations, and 3) implications for future research.

Patterns of Recurring Phemonema

Several patterns of recurring phenomena emerged regarding professor race and credibility: 1) biculturalism, 2) self-concerns, and 3) the professors' overall confidence in their capabilities. The researcher noted the following:

Biculturalism. In the pilot study, Professor B addressed two audiences - students of color and white students. He used linguistic markers to signal his racial identity and connection with the students of color in his course. His Black counterparts in phase two did not use linguistic markers, however, both extensively used the jargon of their respective industries.

In the case of Professor Samuel, there were no Black students enrolled and the most students of color present did not belong to subordinate minority groups (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Professor Mearns' subject matter lended itself periodic use of terminology which could be associated with Blacks. Thus, the conscious use "markers," as reflected in the communication of Professor B, may have been viewed by Professor Mearns as: 1) unnecessary, or 2) difficult to separate from the language of the basic course content. All three Black profesors recognized the power of their language

(Sprague 1991; 1992) in establishing credibility while simultaneously cultivating their cultural identity.

Self concerns. In the pilot study, Professor Mearns revealed continued concerns about the impression he makes on both Black and white students despite his lengthy experience as a professor. The two Black professor participants in phase two also revealed concerns. Professor Samuel, however, indicated that his self concerns decreased after his second year in teaching yet he acknowledged he considered his race as one possible explanation for disruptive classroom behavior and/or being challenged by students in class or in his office. Professor Mearns indicated he worried "all the time" about the image he was creating in the classroom and expressed a desire to be respected and taken seriously.

Capabilities of the professor participants. All of the professor participants saw themselves as credible professors with good, effective teaching techniques. This view was shared by the researcher and, overall, their students. None of the professor participants were threatened by the presence of a researcher in their courses throughout the quarter or impending interviews with a number of their students about their teaching. All of the professors were confident in their knowledge and looked upon the research project as an opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding classroom dynamics and/or as capable of,

ultimately, providing them with insights to enhance their teaching ability.

Study Limitations

The findings of both phases of the study must be carefully considered along with the inherent limitations of the methodological design.

Six professor participants. Six professor participants were used in this research. The researcher was not striving to generalize from the data they provided but, rather, to construct a typology regarding the establishment of credibility based upon similarities noted across a series of cases. The six professors represented three disciplinary areas and the researcher noted similarities and differences across disciplines to maximize the data available.

Research site. This research was conducted in a geographic area in the United States where 10.1% of the population in the metropolitan area was Black whereas only 1.5% of the faculty and 3.2% of student body were Black. The tolerance of racial differences and exposure to Blacks in one's community may vary in other geographic areas.

Protecting the Black professor's identity. Depth and thick description are generally cornerstone's of ethnographic research. However, given the limited number of Black professors at this predominantly white institution, more detailed description would increase the reliability and validity of the research and also would increase the risk of

revealing the identity of the professor participants. Thus, less description was provided than the researcher would have noted had all of the professors been white males who blended in with their departmental peers sharing some of their same attributes - e.g., age, number of years of teaching, etc.

Dyadic familiarity. The procedures followed to identify eligible professor participants allowed the Black professors in a department to refer the researcher to their white counterparts. Thus, the Black professors knew who the reseacher would be soliciting and it was merely a process of elimination to conclude who was selected. In addition, each of the white professors visited was aware that their Black counterpart made the referral.

Implications for Future Research

Two suggestions for adding to the body of knowledge and constructing a typology of communication behavior for Black and white professors and teachers (with an ultimate goal of implementation into professor/teacher training) are:

1. Is there a parallel between the experiences of new and experienced Black professors teaching at predominantly white institutions?
2. What communication cues are used to establish credibility when a Black professor is teaching in an area in which Blacks are negatively stereotyped - e.g., engineering, math, natural science?

There are many other potential areas of investigation which can contribute in reducing the lack of knowledge regarding the classroom experience of Black professors and teachers and well as other professors/teachers of color. Knowledge gained from such investigation can also provide valuable information regarding what communicative behavior

exhibited by professors/teachers of color is effective in promoting student learning.

In addition, the unique communicative event (i.e., a Black female interviewer of Black and white interviewees) of this study needs to be recognized and acknowledged as one research standpoint to be pursued and explored rather than "accounted for" and "balanced" (Collins, 1991). According to Hartsock (1983), research standpoint is not simply an interested (biased) position but, rather, is a sense of being engaged which structures epistemology by positing "duality of levels of reality, of which the deeper level or essence both includes and explains the 'surface' or appearance..." (p. 285). Another potential "standpoint" for this study could have been represented by the disciplinary knowledge and gendered (female) experience of this researcher (Code, 1988).

Despite other available standpoints, this researcher views and analyzes the classroom and dyadic interactions as an "outsider within" employing an "experienceable" qualitative approach (Collins, 1991). The "experienceable" approach incorporates meanings generated by the individual researcher, individual participants, and shared meanings as well (Gerry Philipsen, Personal communication, April 3, 1991)

Conclusion

Speech communication and education researchers have not typically explored teacher credibility or the classroom communication and experiences of teachers and professors of

color - in particular, teachers and professors belonging to subordinate minority groups. As a result, there are gaps in the extant literature due to its incomplete status.

The classroom did indeed present particular challenges for the three Black professors teaching within this predominantly white institution. Unlike their white counterparts, the three Black professor participants expected their credibility to be doubted based upon their race and consciously created verbal and nonverbal messages in order to establish their credibility. Yet, despite the disparate classroom environment, both the Black and white professors were responsible for motivating and assisting their students in attaining the cognitive and self-esteem goals associated with a collegiate academic environment.

According to Geertz (1973), a "text" approach to research provides substantive rather than reductive data. Both Geertz and Bruner (1985) maintain "texts" are context sensitive and open to multiple interpretation. Given the: 1) pivotal role played by teachers and professors, 2) continued expression of the same race-related concerns by Black teachers after several decades of integration, and 3) heavy reliance on quantitative methods to study credibility; hopefully, additional qualitative research "texts" will follow leading to a typology of credibility-building communicative behavior for Black and white professors.

Endnotes

1. The credibility literature review spans the 79 year period from 1915-1993. These journals were reviewed by the author from inception through 1993: Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, Central States Speech Journal, Communication Education, Communication Monographs, Communication Quarterly, Critical Studies in Mass Communication, Human Communication Research, Journal of Communication, Philosophy and Rhetoric, Southern Communication Journal, Quarterly Journal of Speech, and the Western Journal of SpeechCommunication. Each issue of Human Communication Research was reviewed through 1992.

2. "Black" is being used as a formal name designating nationality parallel to the term "African-American." The term "Black" is capitalized in recognition that, due to slavery, most Blacks cannot identify a specific tribe or nationality associated with an "old country" whereas it is more likely that whites can associate themselves with a particular nationality and/or ethnicity.

3. The four research questions were:

   RQ1: What verbal and nonverbal communication cues do professors believe lead their students to perceive them as credible?

   RQ2: What verbal and nonverbal communication cues exhibited by professors, lead students to perceive their professors as credible?

   RQ3: When the professor's race is not the same as the majority of the students' in the class what verbal and nonverbal communication cues do the professor view as leading to student perceptions of credibility?

   RQ4: When the professor's race is not the same as the majority of the students' in the class what verbal and nonverbal communication cues do the students' view as leading to student perceptions of credibility?

4. The last interview with Professor Kindred occurred during the first week of the following quarter.

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Professor Credibility Survey

Section A _____

Gender (*circle one*) **Male** **Female**

Major: _____

Year in School (*circle one*) **Freshman** **Sophomore** **Junior** **Senior** **Other**

Race/Ethnicity (*circle one*) **Black/African American** **Pacific Islander** **Hispanic American**

White/Anglo American **American Indian** **Asian American**

International Student (specify country) _____

If you are willing to participate in a one hour interview with me regarding your impressions of this class and Professor ------, please complete BOTH Sections B and C.

Your name will NOT be used in my final report and Dr. ------ will NOT know you spoke with me.

If you are NOT interested in the one hour interview, leave Section B blank and complete Section C.

Section B _____

Name (please print) _____

Phone Number _____

Convenient Times to Call _____

Section C _____

Is Professor ------ credible? Please discuss why or why not.

What does it mean to say a professor is credible?

Please complete the reverse side.

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Section C (continued) _____

What verbal and nonverbal communicative cues does Professor ----- exhibit to convey credibility?

What other **words** are the same as or similar to "credible"?

What was your first impression of Professor ----- on the very first day of class? Why?

Thank you for assisting me with this research project.

October 1993